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Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia

Statistics about participation in formal and non-formal learning, with a particular focus on work-related training

Reference period 2016-17 financial year

Released 20/12/2017

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Key findings

The Survey of Work-Related Training and Adult Learning (WRTAL) was collected throughout Australia from July 2016 to June 2017.

- Four in ten (40.9%) Australians aged 15-74 years participated in formal and/or non-formal learning in 2016-17. Participation has decreased since the last survey in 2013 (46.4%) and since 2005 (48.9%).
- More men than women participated in formal and/or non-formal learning in 2005. By 2013, participation was higher for women than men, and this continues to be the case in 2016-17.
- One in two (50.5%) men participated in 2005, decreasing to 45.1% in 2013 and then to 39.4% in 2016-17. Women's participation rate was relatively stable between 2005 (47.2%) and 2013 (47.7%) but then fell to 42.3% in 2016-17.
- Participation in formal and/or non-formal learning in 2016-17 was higher for people who were working or unemployed (in the labour force) (46.1%) than for those not in the labour force (28.1%). However, participation by people in the labour force has decreased from the rates recorded in 2005 (59.1%) and then in 2013 (53.1%) to 46.1% in 2016-17. In comparison, participation by people not in the labour force increased from 2005 (25.2%) to 2013 (29.9%) but then decreased in 2016-17 (28.1%).

Table 1 - Formal and/or non-formal learning, Australia, 2005, 2013 and 2016-17(a)

| Indicator | Year(b)(c) | | | Differences | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 2005 | 2013 | 2016-17(d) | 2005 to 2016-17 | 2013 to 2016-17 |
| Formal and/or non-formal learning(a) | | | | | |
| Persons | 48.9% | 46.4% | 40.9% | -8.0pts | -5.5pts |
| Males | 50.5% | 45.1% | 39.4% | -11.1pts | -5.7pts |
| Females | 47.2% | 47.7% | 42.3% | -4.9pts | -5.4pts |
| Age groups | | | | | |
| 15 to 64 years | 53.4% | 50.2% | 44.8% | -8.6pts | -5.4pts |
| 15 to 24 years | 77.8% | 78.1% | 76.1% | (e)1.7pts | (e)-2.0pts |
| 15 to 19 years | 87.2% | 90.5% | 89.9% | 2.7pts | -0.6pts |
| % of persons aged 15 to 19 years currently studying for Year 12 or below | 52.5% | 53.5% | 61.0% | 8.5pts | 7.5pts |
| 20 to 24 years | 68.7% | 67.0% | 63.8% | -4.9pts | -3.2pts |
| 25 to 34 years | 55.5% | 51.0% | 44.6% | -10.9pts | -6.4pts |
| 35 to 44 years | 49.7% | 45.3% | 39.6% | -10.1pts | -5.7pts |
| 45 to 54 years | 49.3% | 42.5% | 36.4% | -12.9pts | -6.1pts |
| 55 to 64 years | 29.6% | 31.6% | 26.2% | -3.4pts | -5.4pts |
| 65 to 74 years | 6.0% | 14.0% | 10.9% | 4.9pts | -3.1pts |
| Labour force status | | | | | |
| In the Labour Force | 59.1% | 53.1% | 46.1% | -13.0pts | -7.0pts |
| Employed | 59.4% | 52.9% | 46.0% | -13.4pts | -6.9pts |
| Unemployed | 53.7% | 55.3% | 46.9% | -6.8pts | -8.4pts |
| Not in the Labour Force | 25.2% | 29.9% | 28.1% | 2.9pts | -1.8pts |
| Participation by type of formal and/or non-formal learning(a) | | | | | |
| Formal learning | 18.5% | 21.6% | 21.0% | 2.5pts | (e)-0.6pts |
| Non-formal learning | 37.9% | 32.1% | 25.5% | -12.4pts | -6.6pts |
| Work related training | 35.9% | 26.9% | 21.5% | -14.4pts | -5.4pts |
| Personal interest learning(f) | n.a. | 8.4% | 6.1% | .. | -2.3pts |

a. Participation in the 12 months prior to survey; persons aged 15 to 74 years.

b. There were changes in collection methods between the surveys in 2005, 2013 and 2016-17. See the Explanatory notes for details.

c. Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005 and Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia, 2013 and 2016-17.

d. Data from 2016-17 has been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

e. The difference between periods is not statistically significant. See the Significance Testing article in this publication for more information: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6227.0.55.002>

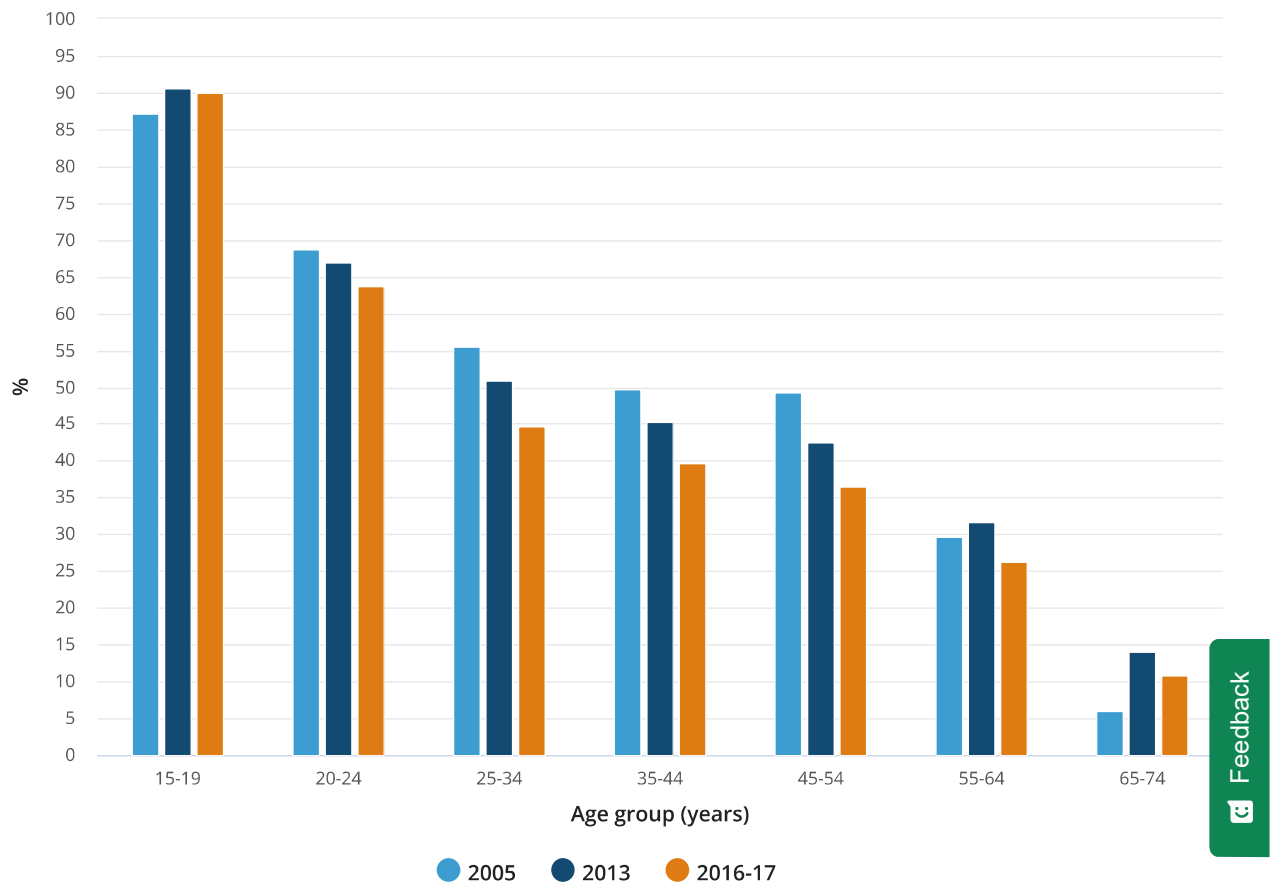
f. Personal interest learning was not collected in 2005 in a way that is comparable to 2013 or 2016-17.

.. not applicable

n.a. not available



Graph 1 - Participation in formal & or non-formal learning by age groups, 2005, 2013 & 2016-17(a)(b)(c)(d)



- There were changes in collection methods between the surveys in 2005, 2013 and 2016-17. See the Explanatory notes for details.
- Participation in the 12 months prior to survey; persons aged 15 to 74 years.
- Persons aged 65-74 years permanently not intending to work, and all respondents who were permanently unable to work, were not asked about work-related training and are included as not participating.
- Data from 2016-17 has been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

Source(s): Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005

Key concepts

This publication focuses on structured or organised learning which is categorised into:

- Formal learning** - structured or organised learning leading to a qualification that is recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), such as a Year 12 or equivalent, a Certificate III, a Diploma or a Bachelor Degree. Formal learning is undertaken at a recognised institution, such as a school, college or university.
- Non-formal learning** - non-formal learning is structured or organised learning that does not lead to a recognised qualification, for example, a construction site induction. Non-formal learning can be undertaken at a recognised institution, such as studying for a Skill Set at a vocational institution.

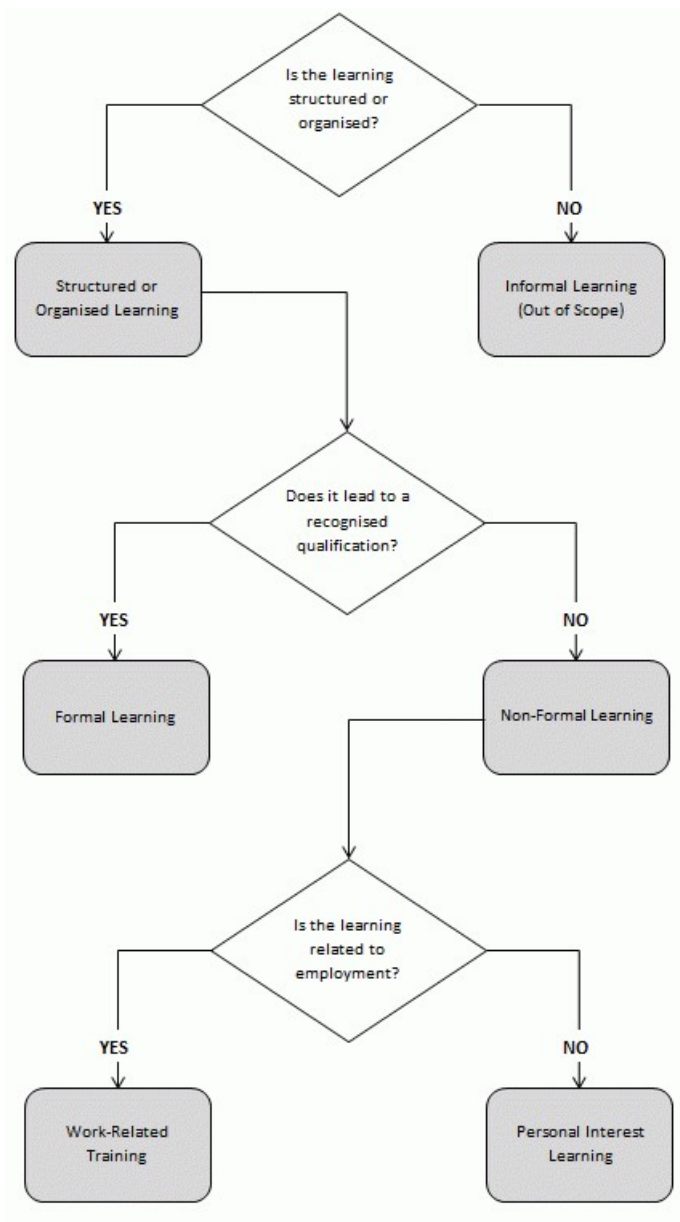
Non-formal learning can be further classified into:

- Work related training, which is undertaken to obtain, maintain or improve employment skills or to improve employment opportunities.
- Personal interest training, which is undertaken because an individual wants to acquire certain knowledge or skills for reasons that are not related to work.

Informal learning is learning that is not structured or organised. It can be either work-related, such as on-the-job learning, or for personal interest. This type of learning is not examined within the context of this release.

The following diagram shows the distinction between the different learning activities that are in or out of scope of the survey.

Diagram 1.1 - Types of learning



Participation in formal learning and non-formal learning

Participation in formal learning remained relatively stable between 2013 (21.6%) and 2016-17 (21.0%). Participation in non-formal learning decreased in 2016-17 (25.5%) from both 2005 and 2013 (37.9% and 32.1% respectively). In 2005, 2013 and 2016-17, women (19.1%, 23.0% and 22.2% respectively) were slightly more likely than men to participate in formal learning (17.8%, 20.2% and 19.8% respectively).

Table 1 - Formal learning and non-formal learning, Australia, 2005, 2013 and 2016-17(a)

| Indicator | Year(b)(c) | | | Differences | |
|-------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 2005 | 2013 | 2016-17(d) | 2005 to 2016-17 | 2013 to 2016-17 |
| Formal learning (a) | | | | | |
| Persons | 18.5% | 21.6% | 21.0% | 2.5pts | (e)-0.6pts |
| Males | 17.8% | 20.2% | 19.8% | 2.0pts | (e)-0.4pts |
| Females | 19.1% | 23.0% | 22.2% | 3.1pts | (e)-0.8pts |
| Non-formal learning (a) | | | | | |
| Persons | 37.9% | 32.1% | 25.5% | -12.4pts | -6.6pts |
| Males | 39.7% | 31.4% | 24.7% | -15.0pts | -6.7pts |
| Females | 36.1% | 32.9% | 26.3% | -9.8pts | -6.6pts |

a. Participation in the 12 months prior to survey; people aged 15 to 74 years.

b. There were changes in collection methods between the surveys in 2005, 2013 and 2016-17. See the Explanatory notes for details.

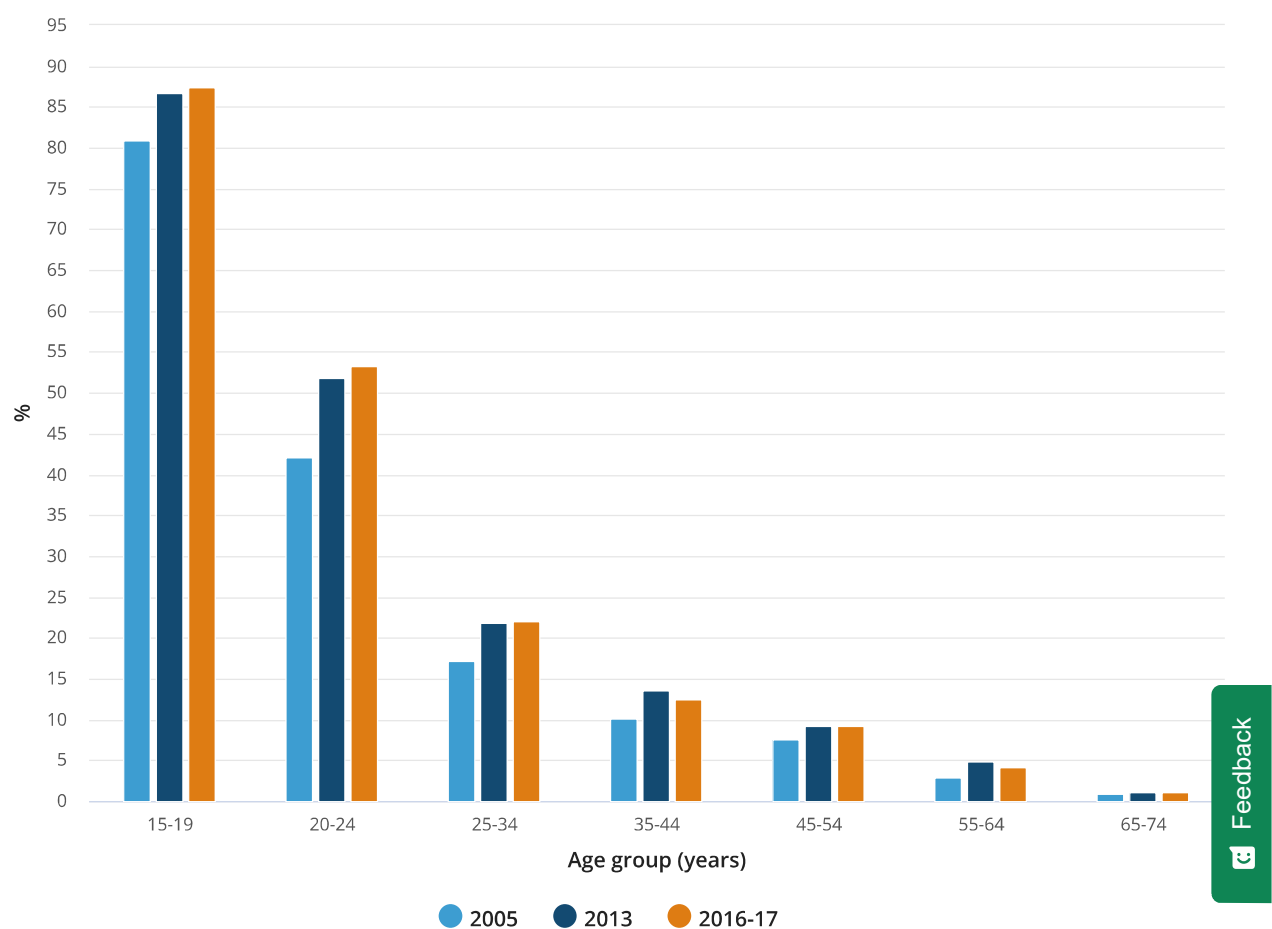
c. Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005 and Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia, 2013 and 2016-17.

d. Data from 2016-17 has been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

e. The difference between periods is not statistically significant. See the Significance Testing article in this publication for more information: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6227.0.55.002>

Participation in formal learning has remained relatively stable across age groups since 2013.

Graph 1 - Participation in formal learning by age groups, 2005, 2013 & 2016-17(a)(b)(c)(d)

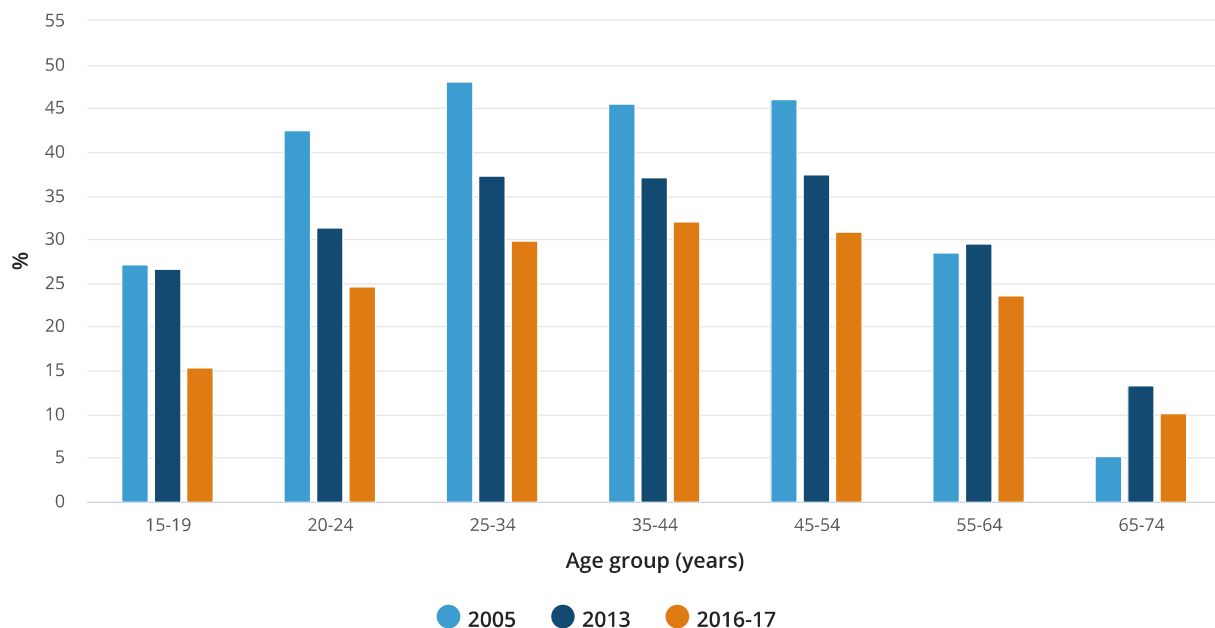


- a. There were changes in collection methods between the surveys in 2005, 2013 and 2016-17. See the Explanatory notes for details.
- b. Participation in the 12 months prior to survey; persons aged 15 to 74 years.
- c. Persons aged 65-74 years permanently not intending to work, and all respondents who were permanently unable to work, were not asked about work-related training and are included as not participating.
- d. Data from 2016-17 has been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

Source(s): Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005

Participation in non-formal learning has decreased across all age groups since 2013.

Graph 2 - Participation in non-formal learning by age groups, 2005, 2013 & 2016-17(a)(b)(c)(d)



- There were changes in collection methods between the surveys in 2005, 2013 and 2016-17. See the Explanatory notes for details.
- Participation in the 12 months prior to survey; persons aged 15-74 years
- Persons aged 65-74 years permanently not intending to work, and all respondents who were permanently unable to work, were not asked about work-related training and are included as not participating.
- Data from 2016-17 has been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

Source(s): Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005

Feedback

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Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 4234.0.

Methodology

[Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia methodology, 2016-17 financial year](#)

